



Thornborough Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110253
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278390
Inspection dates 9 May 2006 to 9 May 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Parker AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant	School address	High Street
School category	Community		Thornborough
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Buckingham MK18 2DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01280 812219
Number on roll	33	Fax number	01280 812219
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Simon Goldburn
Date of previous inspection	22 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Brigid Howard

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 9 May 2006 - 9 May 2006	Inspection number 278390
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school serving an advantaged area. Two thirds of the pupils come from outside the immediate area of the school. All of the pupils are from white British backgrounds. Attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year but is generally above average. There are fewer children with learning difficulties than in most school although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is larger than usual.

Following a period where the school experienced difficulty in recruiting, a new headteacher was appointed in April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are rightly pleased with the provision the school makes for their children. One parent, reflecting the sentiments of a number of others, wrote how her child had, 'grown in confidence, made considerable progress academically and likes going to school, due to...the good teaching... and friendly atmosphere'.

The school's self evaluation is comprehensive. It has accurately identified what it does well and where it can improve. However, it is modest in its own judgement of how effective it is overall.

The children make good progress in the Foundation Stage because the lively teaching provides a wide range of interesting activities that successfully develop their independence, communication and creativity. As a result most reach, and many exceed, the goals set for the end of the Reception year. The pupils continue to do well in Years 1 and 2. They reach standards that are significantly above average. Standards in mathematics are particularly high. Those in writing have improved markedly over recent years but the achievements of the more able are not yet as high as they could be. The teaching is good but lesson planning is not always precise enough to consistently challenge the more able to reach very high standards. The school has begun to improve its resources for information and communication technology (ICT). Currently, pupils do not make sufficient use of ICT and consequently standards, although average, are not high enough.

The new headteacher is leading the school forward with a clear and well focused improvement plan. Strong and purposeful governance steers the work of the school. As a result, it has made good progress since the last inspection. For example, the quality of teaching is now closely monitored. The school is well placed to continue to improve. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in ICT by providing pupils with greater opportunities across the curriculum.
- Ensure lesson plans set out precisely what more able pupils are expected to achieve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and most reach most of the goals set for the end of the Reception year. A good proportion of children exceed these goals and demonstrate considerable confidence when speaking and in their relationships with adults. Most know their letter sounds and use them well to read simple words. The more-able children form letters accurately and can write simple sentences, attempting spellings of more complex words.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with learning difficulties, continue to make good progress. By the end of Year 2 standards are significantly above average. Results of national tests show that standards in mathematics are consistently very high; writing standards have risen markedly over the last three years and are now almost in line with reading standards that are consistently well above average. The school sets challenging targets for pupils and many are successful in reaching them but there is scope to stretch the more able further still, especially in writing.

Standards in ICT, although average, are not high enough and pupils are not making the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Standards of behaviour are high. The pupils are ready to learn and contribute well to lessons. They have very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils, often accompanied by their parents, are now at school in time to start lessons. This is in response to the headteacher's drive to improve punctuality.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. This was well illustrated in an assembly led by the Methodist minister in which he captured the children's interest and led them to reflect thoughtfully on special places and special people.

The pupils are taught to work and play safely. At playtimes they know the rules that apply to the climbing equipment and say that they feel happy and safe. Pupils are encouraged to eat fruit and know that, 'Eating too much salt can kill you!' Physical education, dance and games lessons contribute to the pupils' developing healthy lifestyles. The pupils are learning literacy and numeracy skills that will serve them well in later life but their ICT skills are not being developed sufficiently in this respect.

The school council is playing an increasingly important role in, as one member put it, 'Helping the school to be better'. They have made useful suggestions to improve the playground and have enhanced resources for playtime.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is lively, engages and interests the children and moves them on at a good pace. The children are involved in tasks that motivate them to learn through play, independent and teacher led activities. As a result, many develop reading and writing skills that significantly exceed expectations for their age. When talking to their teacher about worms, the children were encouraged to describe them and when she told them that worms were 'segmented' the more able children confidently attempted the spelling.

Effective teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures the pupils continue to make good progress. This is well illustrated by the useful assessments the teachers make and the comprehensive recording of the pupils' progress. Lessons are purposeful and the pupils' work shows they are given frequent opportunities to write for different purposes. However, it is not always clear exactly what more-able pupils are expected to achieve. Following fieldwork in the village the teacher asked pupils to write a comparison of houses today and one hundred years ago. The task presented a good challenge for most pupils but did not set a precise and demanding target to stretch the more-able pupils. Nevertheless, pupils did well in a task that brought the development of literacy and history skills together very effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage provides pupils with stimulating opportunities in all areas of learning. Tasks are linked around common themes, currently worms! The use of the outdoor area extends the range of activities that are carefully planned to meet the needs of all children.

The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is interesting and gives pupils the opportunity to begin to learn to speak French. The school goes to considerable lengths to provide the pupils with an appropriate physical education curriculum by using the facilities of another school some distance away. However, ICT is not used extensively to support learning across the curriculum. The recent addition of an interactive whiteboard is the first stage in the school's plans to remedy this short-coming.

The school makes good use of visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum but the range of extra-curricular activities is limited to football coaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents commented very positively about the ethos of the school and the care for all pupils. The inspector agrees that the teachers and teaching assistants create a warm, friendly and secure atmosphere for the pupils.

Health and safety checks are carried out and recorded appropriately. The teachers have all had training in child protection. Arrangements for supporting the progress and well being of pupils with learning difficulties are good and effective in ensuring that these pupils are fully included in lessons and play a full part in the life of the school. Links with outside agencies are used effectively to provide support for the pupils when it is necessary.

The school creates safe, lively and welcoming conditions for learning and carefully monitors and records the progress of each child in considerable detail. As one parent summarised, the school is particularly good at, 'Looking at each child individually and providing exceptionally well for all their needs'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

During the recent period when the school was without a substantive headteacher the governors looked very closely at how best to create an effective school in which pupils achieved highly and which maintained the village and family ethos valued by parents. The promotion of a senior teacher to acting headteacher and subsequently into the permanent role has provided continuity. It has also provided an opportunity for the new headteacher and governors to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of what the school does well and where improvements can be made. The resulting school improvement plan provides a very clear strategy for the school to extend its provision and to enhance pupils' achievements. The school has been successful in improving the standards in writing since the last inspection but it is a mark of its commitment to further improvement that it now wants to raise them further. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

The headteacher accurately monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Her positive working relationship with governors and their visits to school keep them abreast of how well it is performing. Regular evaluations of progress towards targets in the school improvement plan add to the useful flow of information. A governor coordinates the school council ensuring pupils' views are also taken into account.

The headteacher leads the small staff effectively. She utilises their strengths to ensure that the pupils receive a broad education, enjoy the opportunities the school provides and make good progress.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Children

This letter is to tell you about the inspection of your school and to thank the members of the school council for talking to me about their work. I enjoyed visiting your school. It is a good school.

I found that: * you are doing well in lessons * the teachers help you to learn lots of new and interesting things* you behave well and listen carefully * you get on well with each other and work together happily* everyone at the school takes good care of you* the headteacher is doing a good job of making the school even better.

The teachers want you to do very well. I have asked them to help you to become better at using ICT and to help some of you to do even harder work, particularly in writing.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Parker,

Lead Inspector